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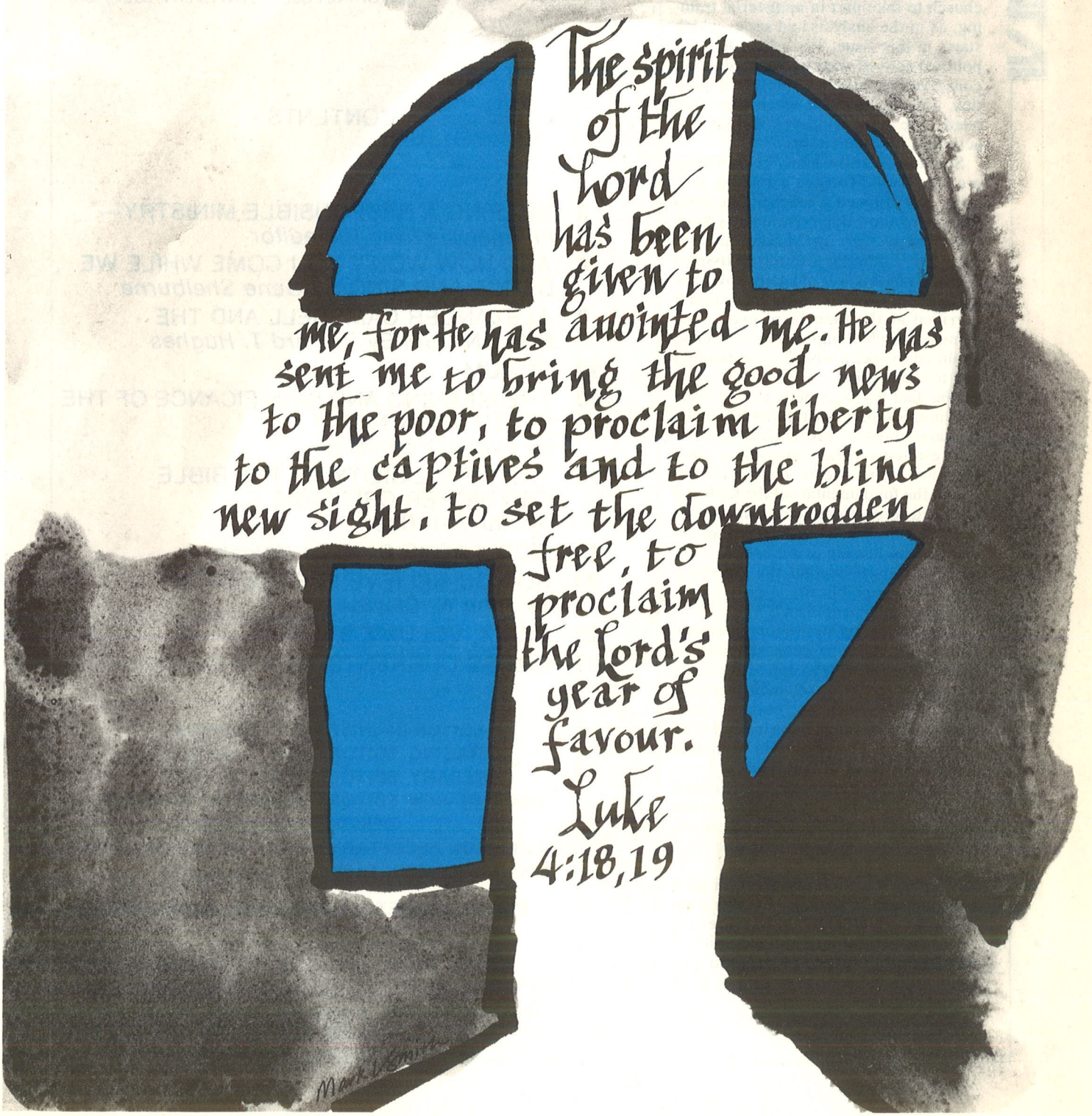

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MISSION

IN THE MARGINS

I always feel uneasy when I urge the church to take part in ministerial training, as in the analysis and series which starts in this issue. It's a little like the political activist who works hard to get conservative churches involved in politics, only to find that when they succeed, the conservatives defeat the activist's favorite causes.

Similarly, I know many church leaders who would forsake a training program if it allowed a teacher like **John Clayton** to allow that creation may have taken longer than six 24-hour days (p. 20). The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) is in this sort of agony now, and many of our own educators are no doubt horrified at the thought of every fundamentalist eldership among us feeling qualified to take a whack at curriculum and teachers alike.

The fact is—and here is our hope—Churches of Christ have not been fundamentalists, historically, in the strictest sense. They have more often than not been able to distinguish between the fundamentals of the faith and the need to date creation. Can we not hope that the church's bishops can develop a relationship to ministerial training that moves beyond the "modernistic"—and unbiblically narrow—concerns of fundamentalism?

Any competent training program requires the skills of such scholars as **Everett Ferguson**, who can also preach the gospel (p.13). (And, incidentally, I hope that his idea of "pattern" as a biological, functional thing instead of an architectural blueprint will stimulate some re-thinking of that issue.)

Thanks to Pepperdine's **Richard Hughes** (p. 7), for suggesting the series on ministerial training. He'll contribute an article later on his own field, church history.

Why not vacation out West Virginia way and take in Bethany College's important historical conference, "Alexander Campbell and the Spirit of Revolution," July 7-10? If you just can't make it, we hope to fill you in on the highlights in later articles.

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TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING ... TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION ... TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."
EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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Shaping a Responsible Ministry

—An analysis from the editor—

OUR NATION MOVES into its third century with a leadership crisis that is similar to the state of the church. The electorate is calling urgently for men and women with the spirit, the integrity, and the training to give responsible form to the chaos of these times. And the church must expect no less from those who will hopefully give it a cruciform shape in this last quarter of a significant century.

Crucial for this task is the training we offer those who are selected from the flock to be its shepherds and ministers. Traditionally this task has been assigned to the college, and, more recently, to the preacher training school. While this analysis will stress the need to improve our approach, full credit must be given to those who have dedicated themselves to the staffing of our pulpits, elderships, and teaching ministries.

Yet, this training must become more responsible. And the churches must involve themselves more directly in the training process if we are to meet the demands of these days. The fierce congregationalism of our movement has sometimes left churches ravaged by self-ordained bootstrap and bootleg practitioners. To avoid the endless repetition of this tragic element of our history it will not do to simply criticize the schools. The churches themselves must shoulder more of the responsibility of seeking out and training its leaders.

As a step in this direction *Mission* is opening a conversation about our inadequacies as well as our potential in this area. A series of articles will describe what ministerial students study and what if anything it has to do with the practice of church. We will ask such questions as "Who is a minister, anyway, in the biblical sense?" We will examine the importance of adequate training in several fields of study. The discipline of Christian ethics, for example, will be treated in terms helpful both to the person in the pew and to the preacher who wants to be acquainted with crucial issues in the field. We also hope to stimulate further reading and study in each of the fields—biblical studies, church history, philosophy and psychology of religion, theology—by those in the ministry who have not had opportunity for formal training in these areas or who simply want a mini-refresher course.

Why does "the ministry" in the Churches of Christ so often need such calls to responsibility? And why is our present system of training inadequate, although creditable in spots? Among many reasons, the most basic is a two-horned dilemma bequeathed to us by the preceding centuries:

On the one hand, *we oppose a professional clergy system.* On the other, *experience seems to dictate something like that very system* because it works. But first, a word from our shortcomings.

In recent history our churches have not been directly involved in Christian higher education because of the belief that this is not properly the work of the church. Still, we felt bound to include ministerial training in the curricula of colleges we support privately. The college, quite naturally, stressed academics—that is the business of the college. But because it was effectively cut off from the more direct interests of the practice of church, the college too often shaped its work after the pattern of the professor's lecture stand instead of the cross.

HOW HIGH IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

A prominent college Bible instructor regularly admits to the preacher students in his classes that he himself was formerly "only a minister." Then, he will say, "I raised my sights and decided to become a professor."

No doubt this is an excusable over-reaction to our traditional fundamentalist mistrust of higher education. But that it *is* an *over*-reaction is everywhere sensed by the church. For the church feels—rightly or wrongly—that its hurts are healed and its conquests are led more by those willing to stand among the people counseling and preaching than by those who stand behind the professorial lectern. The teaching ministry is certainly an essential ministry and a high calling. But the arrogance that assumes that the lectern is "higher" than the pulpit is unbecoming to a profession which, because it stands in the shadow of the Servant Lord, should also take on the foot-washing status of a ministry.

While we should avoid blanket charges, there is no gainsaying the fact that this mood has dominated many of the graduate Bible programs at our colleges. Because professors are not necessarily churchmen in the fullest sense, they are free to be merely academic technicians. They frequently fall victim to the occupational disease that haunts all halls of ivy: self-perpetuationitis. Church History, Greek or Hebrew, New or Old Testament—all are subject to being explored for the sake of the subject, instead of being pressed into the

service of the church, whose ministers sit in the classroom.

This is the syndrome which makes a professor begin to shun undergraduate classes in favor of the academically-oriented candidates for graduate school. The search is on for the brightest pupils who can be groomed not to become the most useful servants of the church but to graduate to Harvard, Yale, or wherever the professor is known. Students who go on to greater academic glory also make the professor's own long years of sacrifice in his discipline worthwhile. The terrific investment will not be lost; the discipline will be perpetuated.

But will the church? Turning our colleges into Harvard prep schools is not necessarily a bad move; it is simply an inadequate service rendered by a school which is the church's main source of preaching ministers. This is no call to be less than excellent in academic work. It is a challenge to clarify the churchly/professorial vision of what it is about—ministering to people and not perpetuating disciplines.

A friend who tired of this approach shares an experience which shows that graduate Bible programs do not have to sacrifice academic excellence in order to involve themselves in the life of the church. He transferred to a seminary—that dread institution castigated by our movement, but tied directly to its church. Some of its professors, recognized as top-drawer in their academic fields, have actually been known to leave their teaching posts in favor of the preaching ministry of a local church.

tacitly calling for a halt in the training schools' flight from responsible scholarship. Their last minister had been a graduate of a preacher school in the south. "We would like," said the voice on the telephone, "to try someone else."

Why? Because the church there was better educated than its former minister (a reversal of roles from early American church life). There was also a lack of breadth, or capacity to fit into a cosmopolitan setting. The school's reaction to the liberal arts education at the college has caused it to purposefully narrow its focus. While it teaches more Bible than even the college's graduate Bible students receive, its limited curriculum is unable to teach enough humanity. Further, its dominant educational approach is memorizing Bible outlines and verses. But it sends its graduates into areas where the non-Bible Belt atmosphere makes Bible outlines an unknown tongue. In asking for "someone else" the church was merely asking for someone who could speak the word in their language and whose handling of the language would not obscure the biblical message.

Of course the preacher schools serve several needs. They are able to fill pulpits where cosmopolitanism is not part of the job description. Many, unable to take advantage of a liberal arts education, have been enabled to serve churches because of these programs. The schools are frequently staffed by men whose love for people exceeds their devotion to a discipline. They have involved the churches directly in the training of their ministry. Yet, those very churches have now had enough experience with the movement to ask yet another pertinent question: Is the preacher training school, with its limited scope and narrow educational method, a responsible and permanently adequate way to train a ministry?

The teacher was not there to bring a missed assignment. He brought a pot of soup. He was teaching ekklesia—the unique community—along with his subject matter.

And it was just such a professor who stood at my friend's door when, shortly after enrolling, he and his wife were both abed with the flu. The teacher was not there to bring a missed assignment. He brought a pot of soup. He knew his work through the eyes and heart of a churchman. He was teaching *ekklesia*—the unique community—along with his subject matter. Surely this is not asking too much of our graduate Bible programs.

THE FLIGHT FROM SCHOLARSHIP

The preacher training school was an inevitable reaction to all this. In many cases it has been a healthy reaction, placing enough pressure on the college that it has been forced to add such church-oriented programs as summer internships for preacher students.

But because the preacher training school was born in reaction, it has been predictably reactionary. Recently a church in a large, northern metropolitan area called seeking a new preaching minister and, in doing so,

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF 'THE MINISTRY'

This sort of critique of alternatives has often been done, and will continue to be required until we revise the theology of the ministry that has been partly at fault for our inadequacies. A single point which should be included in this revision can be only briefly suggested here: *We must accept the brute fact that it is right for the church to train and hire professional ministers.*

Reaction and Return

The Campbells and other early Restoration leaders reacted against what they were pleased to call the "Romish" clergy system of their time. The populist, anti-institutional radical of today could browse happily in the writings of these nineteenth century opponents of

the religious professional. The biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was recovered from the prevailing view that officially ordained clergy alone were fit to preach, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper.

It was not long, however, until this emphasis opened a floodgate of irresponsibility. Ill-trained men, arrogantly abusive of anyone with such skills as the ability to read the Greek New Testament, laid waste many churches with simplistic book-chapter-and-verse pronouncements which shattered our people into fragments which we have yet to piece together again. Eventually, Campbell found it necessary to protest that this was not at all what the doctrine of the universal priesthood required:

> We have no idea that every disciple is to become a public preacher, baptizer, teacher, critic, commentator, at his own volition, option, or solicitation, by virtue of his discipleship, or to act in any public capacity in any society, . . . except by special designation and appointment of the community or communities in which or for which he acts. (*Millennial Harbinger* [October 1832], p. 501.)

Is there not a need to hear the Reformer at this point? Must the clergy system be the only alternative to churches who unthinkingly require no evidence of theological and social responsibility of the leaders who come to work with them? Nothing could be more biblical than for us to devise an ordination (appointment) system, free of narrow creedal implications, but adequate for what Campbell called the "special designation of the community." This would not need to constitute an exclusive definition of "the ministry"; it would rather be a step toward ministerial maturity.

The danger of creating a clergy, and thence deemphasizing the need for every member to be a minister, must be held in tension with the equally biblical emphasis on the church equipping itself to respond flexibly to changing needs. The biblical picture of a developing ministry composed of "lay" evangelists, deacons, and elders—indeed, all disciples—is not the only pattern at stake. There is also the broader pattern required by the doctrine of the *Incarnation*, in which a theology of the ministry must be rooted.

Flesh Belongs to Flesh

The pattern of the ministry was drawn when the Suffering Servant predicted by Isaiah appeared as Jesus, the Christ. When God took on the flesh and blood of humanity, he created the prototype of the church's ministry: it is to serve flesh and blood people, the Body, and those whom the Body itself is to serve. Not only does this mean that ministers must emphasize "practical" skills of serving real people instead of only ideas. It also implies that the ministry *belongs* to the people who are served.

In the great Servant passages of Isaiah the Greek Bible does not "elevate" the Servant to the status of *diakonos*—the kind of official servant developed in the early church. He is rather called a *doulos*—slave, and a *pais*—servant or slave, or even a son, who is bound to do his father's will.

When the apostle Paul transfers these ideas to the church he asks that we take on the same mind—that of a slave—since that conforms to the ministry of the One who exchanged divinity for the form of the Slave par excellence (Phil. 2:5-8). And to whom do such slaves belong? Assuredly, to "Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:1). But Christ is present today in his Body, the church. Thus Paul can also say that *ministers belong to the church* (Col. 1:24-25).

Must the clergy system be the only alternative to churches who unthinkingly require no evidence of theological and social responsibility of the leaders who come to work with them?

But in our tradition we have ignored the more responsible aspects of this fact. True enough, we have sometimes attempted to keep our ministers in bondage by failing to support them adequately (although recent studies indicate this is rapidly changing). What we have failed to do is to discourage the free-wheeling, freelance type of minister who is not appointed or harnessed or ordained by the church. That type of servant is unscriptural.

A theology of the ministry would therefore acknowledge that all Christians are ministers since we are the Body of the Suffering Minister, Christ. But it would also take seriously the fact that special needs may require the designation of special "sons" or servants. It is not a defection from the biblical pattern or a concession to "the denominations" to equip special servants to enflesh the idea of God's love, and to require them to be accountable to the equippers.

Putting It into Practice

But let us fit this theory to a practical situation. Our age is marked by a tendency to turn to religion as the answer to emotional and psychological ills. A biblical theology of the ministry will not allow us to dismiss this fact of life with the response we have all heard—"Let them obey the gospel and that will straighten out their problems." The church following the biblical pattern will not settle for the minister who either makes this response or refuses to equip himself to deal with the affective, emotional aspect of persons.

Neither will it suffice for the church as a community

of priests and ministers-at-large to simply group around a person with emotional problems and love him back to health. While this is an essential dimension of the Christian ministry of all believers, it is often simply inadequate. It is also too uninformed in both psychology and theology to respond adequately to such needs.

An approach to ministry that takes the Ministry of the Incarnation seriously will take another step. It will seek out persons who exemplify the qualities of the Servant and give them special training in servanthood. It will require of them training not only in Bible but in such disciplines as psychology and counseling. It will seek settings for this training where trainers have as much breadth and depth as the whole wide world which God so loved that he became enfleshed in it. The task is too people-oriented to be consigned exclusively to academia. It is too multi-faceted to be turned over to a curriculum without breadth and depth. It demands too much creativity of those being trained to subject them to rote-memory educational approaches.

But what is the best setting for this training? Some of the graduate Bible programs at the colleges are being pointed toward increased emphasis on ministry, but they have not yet effectively involved the church. A few Bible Chairs nod at ministry in the context of liberal arts training at state universities, but churches mainly "support the work" (inadequately) instead of taking a direct and pointed interest in fulfilling their responsibility to train both professional and non-professional ministers.

In whatever setting, the church should be supporting both teachers and students. It could provide internships and job prospects for the professionals. It could work toward developing the sort of responsible ordination or appointing procedure which would supply the dimension of *accountability* which is so generally lacking in our ministerial training.

Taking advantage of such opportunities and revising our inadequate approaches to ministerial training will require more time and more money and more disciplined interest on the part of every member, not simply of the professional few. But if indeed the shaping of a ministry in the form of the Cross is the task of Christ's Body, we can confidently expect his Spirit to infuse the work and give it both life and limb. □

And Now Won't You Come While We Dance and Sing

By Gene Shelburne

A missionary recently quipped that he had discovered three expressions which mean the same in any language or nation: Amen, Hallelujah, and Coca-Cola.

He intended to shame his audience into doing at least as much to share the gospel in foreign fields as the Coke people do to market their product in the same places. It would appear from his argument, however, that Christians are already doing twice as much as Coke. We have universalized two expressions to their one.

Not only have missionaries been "going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature." Evidently they have also been imprinting their converts' minds with words of prayer and praise.

That seems to me to be a significant impact of the Christian mission. In a world where the intellectual community increasingly pours forth philosophies of despair and much of the unlearned populace mopes about in daily dread of some unknown doom, the Christian evangelist (literally, a "messenger with good news") is busy teaching people to sing and shout Hallelujah!

Why is joy a distinctive characteristic of the believer? The poet Chad Walsh explains, "If the surface of my poetry seems lighter, more playful than it did when I was an agnostic, perhaps the reason is that I no longer have to carry the universe on my shoulders." Doubters and deniers of deity do indeed leave themselves a frightful burden to haul around.

Walsh further remarks, "The affirmations of the Christian faith have more of the dance than the dirge about them."

Rejoicing children of God stand out among the somber pagans of our day like rays of sunlight smiling through smog. They reflect the radiance of the Son. □

Gene Shelburne preaches at the Anna Street Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas. He is managing editor for the Christian Appeal, *from which this article is reprinted by permission.*

Did Alexander Campbell believe that the kingdom of God went hand in hand with the American dream?

Alexander Campbell and the Millennium

By Richard T. Hughes

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT and American civil religion can hardly be conceived as antagonistic traditions. Not only is this true today, but it was equally true in the early nineteenth century when both the Republic and the Movement were being shaped and formed. No one better illustrates this than Alexander Campbell, whose relationship to American civil religion was marked by two distinct stages, divided roughly by 1840. Prior to 1840, Campbell did not embrace American civil religion as he would later. But his theology even in those early years displayed many of the same impulses and goals as did the larger faith of the nation. In fact, the similarity of means and ends was so profound that by 1841 Campbell was confusing the church with the nation in a way that would be normative for the Movement for years to come.[1]

WHAT MADE 'CIVIL RELIGION'?

American civil religion, in the period under consideration, was a highly complex fabric interwoven by a number of theological threads. In many instances, the threads had been spun from the same intellectual loom. The first of these threads was *the distinctly Puritan dimensions* of American civil religion. Its background was Tudor-Stuart England, when it commonly was thought that England was a chosen nation, a "new Israel," standing in a covenant relationship with God.

William Tyndale had taught his countrymen well that if England remained faithful to her calling, she would be blessed and uplifted by God. But if she failed, she would be cursed. Significantly, by the time of the Marian Exiles (1553–1558), faithfulness was defined as fidelity to the Bible and to the model of the primitive, apostolic church.[2] But when the English monarchs failed to foster sufficiently—or often, at all—the Puritan conception of orthodoxy, many Puritans left the Old World for the New, taking with them all the old symbols of chosen people and national covenant.

Just before leaving the English shore for the last time, Thomas Hooker, founder of Connecticut, made it clear to his countrymen that not only was *he* going to the New World, but God was going with him, for England had broken the covenant. Thus, Hooker bemoaned that

> God is packing up his gospel because nobody will buy his wares nor come to his price. O, lay hands on God, and let him not go out of your coasts. He is a going. Stop him, and let not thy God depart . . . . ("The Danger of Desertion" [1633], in *Nationalism and Religion in America*, p. 25.)

But from the New England Puritans' perspective, the English did nothing to detain their God. And early in the Colonial experience one discovers that the Colonists now are the chosen and covenanted people, and that God now resides in America. Michael Wigglesworth was but reflecting a common theme when he wrote of New England in 1662 that

> Gods throne was here set up; here was
> His tabernacle pight:
> This was the place, and these the folk
> In whom he took delight.

Moreover, he made it clear that

> The Lord had made (such was his grace)
> For us a Covenant

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Both with the men, and with the beasts,
That in this desart haunt . . . .
("God's Controversy with New England" [1662], in *God's New Israel*, pp. 46-47.)

One condition of the covenant was simply that New Englanders remain true and faithful to the

. . . living bread from Heaven,
Withouten Errour's bane, or Superstition's leaven.
[Ibid.]

John Robinson, of Plymouth Plantation fame, made it clear that this error-free, "living bread from heaven" was the bread of the primitive, apostolic church which he wished to restore. He wrote:

> We do believe by the Word of God that the things we teach are not new, but old truths renewed; so are we not less persuaded, that the church constitution in which we are set, is cast in the apostolical and primitive mould, and not one day nor hour younger, in the nature and form of it, than the first church of the New Testament. (*The Works of John Robinson*, II, p. 43.)

And to the extent that they remained "cast in the apostolical and primitive mould," the Puritans thought, their covenanted God would bless them and raise them up and make them "a Citty upon a Hill" with "the eies of all people . . . upon us," as John Winthrop expressed it in 1630 (*God's New Israel*, p. 43). In this way, Puritan orthodoxy and American chosenness became simply two sides of the same cultural coin, a coin whose shine would be polished to a radiant brightness during the Second Great Awakening following the Revolution.[3]

Puritan orthodoxy and American chosenness became simply two sides of the same cultural coin.

ALL THINGS NEW

Significantly—and this was another thread of American civil religion in the post-Revolutionary period—the first and most central aspect of the American "Citty upon a Hill" was *its radical newness*. The faults and corruptions of the Old World had been eclipsed and, if anything, America was a repristination of that primordial order—often symbolized by the Garden of Eden—that stood at the beginning of time.

This conviction was inspired at first by the very newness of the land itself. As John Locke noted, "In the beginning, all the world was America." But the radical experiement in liberty fanned the flames of newness. By the end of the eighteenth century the conviction prevailed that not only the land but the social and political order as well were untouched by the corruptions of previous civilizations and harked back, instead, to a primordium of purity and innocence. R. W. B. Lewis notes that the early nineteenth century American was complete in his

> emancipation from the history of mankind. He was to be recognized now for what he was—a new Adam, miraculously free of family and race, untouched by those dismal conditions which prior tragedies and entanglements monotonously prepared for the newborn European (*The American Adam*, p. 41).

And Sidney E. Mead has argued that among the dominant motifs in the Revolutionary period was

> the idea of pure and normative beginnings to which return was possible; the idea that the intervening history was largely that of aberrations and corruptions which was better ignored; and the idea of building anew in the American wilderness on the true and ancient foundations. (*The Lively Experiment*, p. 111.)

Americans with an Enlightenment bent generally judged those foundations to consist primarily in the primordium of nature, while Americans with a Puritan bent generally located those foundations in the primitive age of the church. That is, the Adamic symbol was interpreted either literally: Adam in the primordial Garden of Eden; or figuratively: Jesus as the new Adam. And in some instances the literal and figurative interpretations were not all that distinct.

The third thread in the early nineteenth century civil religion was a concern for *national, pluralistic unity*. This emphasis was rooted firmly in the English Enlightenment. Significantly, the religious dimensions of the English Enlightenment were, to a large extent, a response to the English Puritans' inability to agree on what shape "the apostolical and primitive mould" should take. Largely because of this disagreement, the Puritans fragmented during the early seventeenth century into Independents, Presbyterians, and Separatists, and during the period of the English Civil Wars (1642–1649), the fragmentation process yielded Seekers, Quakers, Baptists, and other groups, all claiming to conform to the model of the primitive church. Moreover, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholics and Protestants were fighting and killing each other over the shape of "orthodox" Christianity, with the implied suggestion on the Protestant side that "orthodox" meant ancient.

TOWARD 'NATURAL RELIGION'

On the face of this situation, reasonable men began asking if it were possible to be religious and at the same time tolerant, or if religion would lead inevitably to disunity, societal fragmentation, and wars. The most notable answer to this question—and the answer destined to form one dimension of American civil religion—was the answer of the English Deists.

The Deists asserted that religion predicated on *revelation* would always lead to disunity and fragmentation because men simply could not agree on what constituted Christian "orthodoxy." But there was a religion, the Deists argued—*a religion of nature* knowable by reason alone—that would yield unity rather than disunity and peace rather than war. For nature they held, teaches the essential points of religion that are clear and evident to all reasonable men and upon which all reasonable men can therefore agree.

Among these essential, evident doctrines were the notions that (1) there is a God, (2) there is a moral order, and (3) there are eternal rewards and punishments. Since nature, through reason, can teach us these things, the Deists argued, there was absolutely no need for revelation, for revelation can teach us nothing essential that we do not already know through nature. Beyond this, revelation can only yield questionable points of doctrine that serve to divide, if not destroy, society. Thus, in their quest for unity and peace in society, the Deists completely rejected a religion of revelation and opted instead for a religion of nature.

This religion of nature was destined to be the basic theology upon which the American founding fathers sought to structure the Republic, as Sidney E. Mead has pointed out so well on so many occasions. For this reason, Mead has referred to this theology as "the theology of the Republic" (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, March 1976, pp. 105-113). To be sure, the American founders were confronted with the task of providing for social cohesion in the face of the many sectarian persuasions that were brought from the Old World to the New, each claiming to be true to the Bible and each hoping for favored and established status. As the founders for the most part were Deists, their theology served the circumstances well. Thus, they pointed the Republic to the God of nature and to the morality which nature taught, namely, that "all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness . . .," and they specifically ascribed this morality to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God."

The Deists completely rejected a religion of revelation and opted instead for a religion of nature. This was the basic theology upon which the American fathers sought to restructure the Republic.

While not all men could confess that there is a Christian trinity whose God saves some and damns others to hell, all men *could* acknowledge that there is a Creator who guarantees to all human beings, regardless of creed or nationality, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. By recognizing such a universal God, the founders extended liberty to the particular Christian orthodoxies but relegated them to the wings where they could not cause a tumult upon the larger stage of the Republic. Moreover, if any man wanted liberty for his own sect and/or opinion, he had to extend that same liberty to others, thereby acknowledging the God of nature and the morality of liberty which that God taught. In this way, a sizeable portion of America's national faith became a faith in pluralistic liberty, predicated not upon the God and morality of Christian orthodoxy but rather upon the God and morality of nature, which was the common property of all men.

This national faith in pluralism and liberty was so overwhelming that it came to be a common conviction in the early nineteenth century that the American state, which for the first time in human history had extended liberty to all men, would surely inaugurate the millenium and become the kingdom of God on earth. This faith in the great American millennium was yet another distinct thread in the fabric of early nineteenth century civil religion.

The millennial hope also was predicated on the intense belief in America's radical and primordial newness and innocence. In other words, the purity and innocence of the primordial age would be duplicated in the millennium when the American experiment in liberty had conquered the globe, freed the nations, and united the family of man. This, at least, is what I would make of Sidney Mead's category, "the sense of historylessness," which dominated the Revolutionary epoch (*The Lively Experiment*, pp. 108ff.). History had been transcended, for Americans had one foot in the primordial past and the other in the millennial present and/or future.

DUPLICATED THEMES

When one turns to Alexander Campbell prior to 1840, one discovers an uncanny duplication, on a microcosmic, ecclesiastical scale, of most of the impulses embodied by American civil religion during that period. The "sense of historylessness"—the quest for the primordium—found expression in Campbell's "search for the ancient order" of the Christian faith. Christian history was to be transcended, for only the first age bore ultimate significance for the present. Thus, Mead notes that, in this period when the "sense of historylessness" was so prevalent,

> it is notable that the most successful of the definitely Christian indigenous denominations . . . , the Disciples of Christ, grew out of the idea of a "new reformation" to be based, not on new insights, but on a "restoration" of the practices of the New Testa-

ment church . . . . Typically American, this beginning over again was not conceived as a new beginning, but as a picking up of the lost threads of primitive Christianity. (Ibid., p. 111.)

Moreover, it should be noted that Campbell's overriding emphasis on primitive Christianity was but a continuation of the old Puritan insistence on "the primitive and apostolical mould," upon which God's blessings to the covenanted nation were in some respects contingent.

Second, when Campbell came to the American frontier he encountered the same dilemma in American Christendom that the founding fathers had encountered in the Republic at large: how to preserve unity without repressing the radically new pluralism which was the crown and glory both of the nation and of American Christianity. And Campbell responded to the dilemma in essentially the same way as had the founders before him. This is not surprising, considering that both Campbell and the founders had been reared and nourished on the political and religious thought of the British Enlightenment.

Thus, the founders did not seek to destroy the sects but simply to eclipse their potential for disruption by focusing on a common core of essential doctrines. And Campbell, similarly, did not seek to destroy opinions, but simply to defuse their potential for disrupting Christendom by focusing on the common core of essential New Testament doctrines that were evident, he thought, to all reasonable Christians.

Thus, Campbell wrote that "there is but 'one faith,' but nowhere is it written that there is but *one opinion*." For this reason he asserted that "we do not ask them [Christians] to give up their opinions—we ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinions; but let them hold them as private property" (*Millennial Harbinger*, April 1830, p. 145). Thus while the founders of the Republic sought to unify it by pointing to the God of nature, Campbell sought to unify American Christendom by restoring the "one faith" of the primitive, apostolic church.

THE MILLENNIUM WAS NEAR

Third, Campbell shared with a whole host of early nineteenth century Americans the fervent conviction that the millennium, that glorious kingdom of God on earth, was about to commence. But at this point, in the early years of his career, Campbell parted company with most of America's Protestants—Lyman Beecher, for example—who insisted that the millennium would be inaugurated by the Republic itself, by its primordial newness and by its revolutionary experiment in human rights, pluralism, and liberty.

Campbell, on the other hand, insisted in 1830 that the millennium was destined to be ushered in, not by the Adamic nation, but rather by the primitive church which would unite the family of man and which, in time, would engulf the nations, including his own. The day

Campbell insisted that the millennium was to be ushered in by the (restoration of) the primitive church which would unite the family of man and which, in time, would engulf the nations, including his own.

was coming, Campbell argued, when Christianity would conquer the world and when "*Jesus Christ will yet govern the world by religion only . . . .*" This unified Christocracy, he claimed, would be brought about when "Christianity, rightly understood, cordially embraced, and fully carried out in practice," would

> certainly subvert all political government, the very best as well as the very worst . . . . The admirers of American liberty and American institutions have no cause to regret such an event, nor cause to fear it. It will be but the removing of a tent to build a temple . . . (*Popular Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 374-375).

But the unity which Campbell hinged upon the restored, primitive church was slow in commencing. By 1841 Campbell was looking more to the power of the Republic than to the power of the restored church to usher in that millennial age of liberty, pluralism, and unity. Primitive Christianity had not become the common religion as he had expected. Instead, Campbell now recognized that Americans *did* share a common religion which consisted in "the rights of conscience . . . [and] in a solemn recognition of the being and perfections of God, of a day of judgment, of future and eternal rewards and punishments."[4]

While this was substantially the content of that Deistic theology with which the founders had sought to unify the Republic, Campbell nevertheless baptized it into Protestant orthodoxy and called it "a *common* Christianity." And it was precisely this "common Christianity," this Protestantized civil religion, this paradoxical hybrid of orthodoxy and liberty, that Campbell now thought would enlighten the world and inaugurate the millennial age.

Of the immigrants pouring into America's harbors, Campbell wrote in 1852 that

> we will, by common schools and common ministrations of benevolence, dispossess them of the demons of priestcraft and kingcraft, and show them our religion by pointing to our common schools, our common churches, our common colleges, and our common respect for the Bible, the Christian religion and its

divine and glorious Founder—the Supreme Philanthropist. (*Popular Lectures and Addresses*, p. 181.)

With regard to the gentiles still abroad, Campbell wrote that it was the special task of "Protestant America and Protestant England" to shine the light of freedom and liberty into all the world. "This is our special mission into the world . . . and for this purpose the Ruler of nations has raised us up . . ." (Ibid., p. 174). And when this mission was accomplished, Campbell exulted, then "will 'they hang their trumpet in the hall, and study war no more.' Peace and universal amity will reign triumphant. For over all the earth there will be but one Lord, one faith, one hope and one language" (Ibid., p. 44).

In voicing these sentiments, Campbell was but reaffirming the oldest motifs of the American civil religion tradition, motifs that date back to the earliest years of the Colonies, namely, that the American people were chosen and elect of God for a special destiny precisely because they were Protestant and thus were "cast in the apostolical and primitive mould."

LIBERTY AND ORTHODOXY LINKED

This blend of liberty, Protestant orthodoxy, the chosenness of the Republic, and the Republic's mythic, primordial origins and millennial destiny—this unique constellation of symbols—constituted, it seems to me, the very heart of the early and mid-nineteenth century American civil religion. And Alexander Campbell, in his later years, was undoubtedly one of its most eloquent exponents.

How Campbell—as well as a whole host of other Americans of his age—could link Protestant orthodoxy with the quest for universal liberty, and imagine the animal thus created to be in any sense whole or coherent, is a mystery yet to be unravelled by students of this period. But that is not the question that concerns us here. Of more pressing importance to the readers of *Mission*, I suspect, is how a man committed to primitive Christianity, as opposed to a commonly held, culture religion, could finally embrace the culture religion at the expense of his perception of the primitive faith.

One suggestion is that an individual might conclude that adherence to the primitive faith is itself a culture, or at least a sub-culture, religion.[5] But Campbell never reached this conclusion. The only answer I can suggest, in Campbell's case, is that he expected from the primitive faith a miracle which it simply could not perform. Mortals cannot raise the dead, and the primitive faith could not become universal.

Campbell had not learned what the Anabaptists had understood already in the sixteenth century, namely, that a church constructed on the restoration (*restitutio*) model "was and is, in doctrine, life, and worship, a people separated from the world" (Menno Simons, *Complete Works*, p. 679). Since Campbell made the primitive church a means to an end rather than an end in itself, and since the end toward which he aimed was the unity of the church and the ultimate regeneration of the entire human race, he made it almost inevitable that the sectarian quality of his primitive faith would be swallowed by the culture to which he spoke.

It was inevitable that the sectarian quality of Campbell's primitive faith would be swallowed by the culture to which he spoke.

Moreover, the American founding fathers had aimed at substantially the same goal—pluralism and unity—as did Campbell, and, utilizing different means, had hit the mark with far more accuracy and success than did he. Thus, it is hardly surprising that by 1841, insofar as the regeneration of society was concerned, Campbell's restored, primitive church had been eclipsed by what Meade calls "the nation with the soul of a church"[6] that *novus ordo seclorum* which, from the early nineteenth century perspective, had revived the blessings of the primordium and which had made all things new.

NOTES

1. The one notable exception to this pattern was the southern wing of the Restoration Movement from the end of the Civil War until well into the twentieth century. But by 1945, even in the South, the pattern once again had become normative. Cf. David Edwin Harrell, "The Churches of Christ and American Civil Religion since 1945," a paper to be presented at a conference on "Alexander Campbell and the Spirit of the Revolution," Bethany College, July 7-10, 1976. Cf. also Norman Parks, "From Revolution to Arrival: Tracing the Drift," *Mission*, 9, 7 (February 1976), pp. 10-14.

2. Cf. James C. Spalding, "Restitution as a Normative Factor for Puritan Dissent," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 44, 1 (March, 1976), pp. 47-63.

3. Cf. Robert Bellah's chapter, "America as a Chosen People," in his *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 36-60.

4. Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (St. Louis: John Burns, 1861), p. 259, etc. In a recent study on Campbell and civil religion with a somewhat different perspective, Mont Whitson also has called attention to the element of "common religion" in Campbell's thought. Cf. Whitson, "Campbell's Post-Protestantism and Civil Religion," *West Virginia History*, 37, 2 (January 1976), p. 118.

5. This judgment was pronounced on the reformer John Knox by Richard Cox in 1554–55. Cf. Ronald J. Vander Molen, "Anglican Against Puritan: Ideological Origins during the Marion Exile," *Church History*, 42, 1 (March 1973), pp. 45-57.

6. Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation with the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); see especially pp. 48-77.

□

FORUM

Outsiders: Stay Out

I appreciated your interpretive report in the March issue on the "Price of Peace in Gainesville." I'm sure the elders there did what they felt was the Lord's will. I feel the particular issues are their concern and I should not offer opinion on these or on their handling of the affair.

I do object to the entry of outsiders into the affair. It is bad enough when another congregation in our "non-denominational" brotherhood feels compelled to discipline another church, but when men gather from all over the U.S. to arbitrate, it is close to structure time.

Are we going to allow a group of men from outside the local congregation to arbitrate, decide who is right and who is wrong and who repents and who forgives? Not if we want to remain a movement for non-sectarian freedom in Christ. Yes, if we want to be a settled church with comfortable sameness.

At least one of the participants in the Gainesville Council seems to want the latter. He, in fact, created the incident—by nationalizing the division of the churches in Gainesville, and polarizing feelings by preaching whole meetings on the situation. He feels that autonomy (freedom) is less important than rightness. He has written that "as important as congregational autonomy and integrity are, unless brethren are going to continue 'steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . .' (Acts 2:42), these concepts are BESIDE THE POINT!" He maintains that a church can do as she pleases, "so long as she pleases to do right; but when (she) no longer pleases to do right, she no longer has a right to do as she pleases" (Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Axe on the Root,* III, p. 121.)

Now who has appointed Brother Rice to decide who is right? If we want a committee to decide issues for us, let's don't let a man so hungry for the job do it. If we don't want it, let's refuse to let it happen by default.

RICHARD HALL
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If Not Creeds, Opinions?

Stan Paregien ("The Creedal Mind," April issue) seems to defeat his own purpose by the subjective structure from which he writes. For instance, he concludes by saying *"In my opinion, the test of orthodoxy today . . . ."*

If there is no basis for creeds, then are they to be displaced by "opinions"? Is the "test of orthodoxy today" to be determined by an "opinion"? If we can do without creeds, may we not also get along without opinions? If the Bible, without being "summarized" in a creed, is sufficient, is it not also just as sufficient minus the author's opinion?

The fact is, the "Restoration plea" about creeds has itself been little more than an instrument of division, primarily as a means of attacking older Christian communities and making proselytes of those who obviously are willing to take the attacker's "opinion" rather than the "opinions" of those who set forth the "creed." Despite the universal claim of "no creed" by the Restorationists, there is as little "unity" among them as in any other professing Christian community, not to mention the utter failure of Alexander Campbell's claim that his "unity" movement would usher in the millenium for all "sects."

The test of any sermon, tract, book, creed or any other form of communication that attempts to state the objective truth of God and man's responsibility to that truth is simply this: *Is it indeed the truth?* And every man is personally responsible to determine that for himself and live with the consequences. Although most Christians believe the Bible is the source of truth, they do not all arrive at a complete agreement on what the Bible teaches — and at that point, each must "fend for himself."

I am a Baptist and every Baptist confession of faith to my knowledge recognizes this liberty and responsibility, even to the point of subjecting the confession itself to future revision should it be found short of the mark at some point.

Mr. Paregien obviously thinks he is above the category of the "creedal mind," yet this is purely within his subjective structure of thought. His arbitrary condemnation of creeds, without any consideration of their content, is simply a device to lead the reader to his ultimate, "In my opinion, the test of orthodoxy today . . . ." At that point, we are saddled with The Paregien Creed, or if he prefers, The Paregien Opinion.

BOB L. ROSS
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The Meaning and Significance of the Restitution Motif

By Everett Ferguson

I HAVE the double assignment of conducting a Bible study and summarizing the concerns of a church history conference. These two responsibilities, in this case, are not so far apart as might be thought. The history conference has been concerned with the theme of restitution, and restitution is concerned with the Bible.

The Scripture text for our lesson is 1 Peter 1:18–2:3. I want us to focus on the statement, "The word of the Lord abides forever," a quotation from Isaiah 40:8, and the comment, "That word is the good news which was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:25).

I

We may give an exposition of this passage in terms of a key word for 1 Peter, *salvation*. Notice the sequence of ideas.

First, salvation is through the *death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The text says, "You were ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (vs. 18f.) whom God "raised from the dead" (vs. 21). Those addressed had received "sprinkling with his blood" (vs. 2) and knew his sufferings (vs. 11). They had been "born anew . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (vs. 3).

The second point to notice is that this salvation *was preached to them*. Good news had been preached (vs. 23). Verses 10-12 elaborate on this: "This salvation" has "now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit."

The third point is that on the basis of this message of salvation *they had believed*. "Your faith and hope are in God" (vs. 21). First Peter is addressed to those "who believe" (2:7). Verses 8 and 9 say, "Though you do not now see him you believe in him . . . . As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls." Verse 7 speaks of the "genuineness of your faith," and verse 5 says you "are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Fourth in the sequence, *they had been baptized* for salvation. Baptism is explicitly mentioned only at 3:21, "Baptism . . . now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience." The language of our text, however, is baptismal in other passages: the idea of "obedience to the truth" (vs. 22) occurs in the discussion of the meaning of baptism in Romans 6:16f.; "born anew" reminds us of John 3:5, "born of water and the spirit"; for the baptismal associations of "born anew" we may further compare the statement of 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism . . . saves you . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" with the statement of 1:3, "born anew . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Fifth in the sequence is the exhortation to *grow up to salvation* (2:3). This concern was already announced in 1:14, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." Believers are exhorted to continue faithful, because final salvation remains future. The kind of conduct which is required is the theme of the rest of 1 Peter.

This five fold sequence may be compared with the "great commission." The great commission comes at the close and climax of the gospels. It contains the last words of Jesus, his final instructions to his disciples.

The great commission follows the *death and resurrection*. Luke brings these events into the commission itself. He has the risen Jesus say in Luke 24:46, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead."

The commission itself was to *preach the gospel*. Luke 24:47 continues, "That repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations." Matthew's account of the charge is that they should "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

The response called for was *faith*. This is implied in Matthew's "make disciples." It becomes explicit in the long ending of Mark, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Baptism is included in the response also in Matthew's account, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

The *Christian life* is referred to in the command, "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Furthermore, the promise, "I am with you always, to the close of the age," reminds us of the promise, the "word of the Lord abides" throughout the *age*. It is the same Greek word in both passages.

So we have a complete correspondence between 1 Peter and the great commission: the death and resurrection of Christ; preaching the message of salvation; believing it; being baptized; and living accordingly.

Professor Littell has taught us that those groups who have followed the restitution motif have taken the great commission seriously. They have had a distinctive doctrine of the church, and that doctrine is very similar in each group. For them the great commission has determined the nature of the church. The great commission gives the church its mission and tells how one becomes a member of it. It serves as a key to the interpretation of Acts and the rest of the New Testament. People who have followed this have been concerned with the life

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Dr. Everett Ferguson, professor of church history at Abilene Christian University, preached this sermon at the Malibu Church of Christ at the conclusion of Pepperdine University's Conference on "Restitution, Dissent, and Renewal" (see Mission, August and September-October, 1975).

and practice as well as with the faith of the New Testament church. With the great commission we may find our meeting point between our Bible study and the concerns of church history.

II

Christians with the restitution emphasis have been concerned with *mission*, with preaching the Lord's salvation. They have done so even in the face of persecution. The gospel requires taking up the cross of *suffering* (Matt. 16:24), and there is a considerable theology of suffering in 1 Peter. The church is the suffering people of God.

And Christians who have taken the great commission seriously have emphasized the *brotherhood of believers*, the visible church. "Make disciples" implies gathering a people, and there is a great deal in 1 Peter about believers as a community, a people, a church. Our text spoke about "love for the brethren" (1:22), but compare especially 2:5, 9—the spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people who declare his wonderful deeds.

As Christians have preached the gospel to all nations and as the centuries have passed, they have sought a *continuity with the New Testament church* in various ways. Consider some of these ways of establishing continuity.

(1) Through a *papal head*. Through communion with the bishop of Rome men have claimed a connection through the succession of popes back to Peter and the apostolic church.

(2) Through *episcopal succession*. Through communion with a clergy ordained by bishops in the apostolic succession some have claimed a connection with the early church.

(3) Through *conciliar creeds*. Through confessing the creeds of the ecumenical councils some have claimed a connection through patristic theology with the ancient church. Accepting the ecumenical creeds and councils gives a theological continuity.

(4) Through *family connections*. Being born into a Christian family or a Christian society is thought by others to bring one into the covenant relationship with God. The view is not usually stated in this way, but essentially it comes down to family ties establishing continuity for God's church.

(5) Through reviving *accidental features of New Testament times*. Repetition of cultural practices of the first century, such as foot washing, may be taken as a mark of continuity with the primitive church.

(6) Through efforts to reproduce the *supernatural phenomena of apostolic times*. Such things as faith healing and speaking in tongues may be considered as guaranteeing a continuity with the apostolic church.

Whatever values these positions may have, I would affirm that continuity with the New Testament church depends on no such things. It depends on no historical connections—whether of linear succession or of repeated phenomena. To illustrate what I mean, there are churches in New England that can trace their descent back to the seventeenth century Puritans. Their church covenants are still preserved; their buildings occupy the same plots of ground; their membership rolls contain lineal descendants of founding families. But no one would make the mistake of calling these churches Puritan—in doctrine (some are Unitarian) or in life.

On what then does continuity depend? It depends on what 1 Peter and the great commission made central: *preaching* the same gospel of Christ crucified and raised, and *making the same response* of faith and obedience. New Testament Christianity is to be found wherever people preach and live by the same gospel as in New Testament times. Continuity depends on doctrine and life.

My inclusion of "life" here distinguished restitution churches from churches of the Reformation. The churches of the restitution in the sixteenth century said of the classical reformers in that century that they sought to reform the church by a return to doctrinal purity ("justification by faith") but left life where it had been. Whatever misunderstanding this criticism reflects, it does show where the restitutionists put their emphasis. And restoration movements of every age have said that it is not only right doctrine, but right response to that doctrine that is important in defining the church. Continuity involves more than right doctrine, more than correct administration of the sacraments, more even than the exercise of discipline.

The New Testament church exists where the same gospel is preached (the death and resurrection of Jesus) and persons make the same response to it (in faith, baptism, and Christian living). the idea of restitution is a return to the life-style as well as to the doctrine of the apostolic church. It is the conviction that *in* the doctrine inheres the nature of the response. Restitution, therefore, is concerned with the nature of the church, the kind of worship, the style of life, as well as with a recognition of the central priority of the gospel.

Since the word of God converts, restorationists turn to it for guidance in worship, organization, discipline, and Christian living. These are practical needs which follow on one's conversion to Christ. There is no choice about whether to do them; the only choice is how. Saved men will worship the God who saved them; they will seek to please him in their lives; they must be related to one another in some way. It is natural to let the same Bible which brought the message of salvation guide in these matters too. The Reformers stressed doctrine; the modern church has stressed life (moral and social); restitution would hold these together. The

restitution conviction is that the New Testament church exists where the same gospel is preached *and* the same response is made to it.

III

The various programs of restitution have been subject to *various dangers*. Each theological approach has its peculiar difficulties. That restorationism has problems associated with it is no argument in itself against it as a theological method. Whatever approach one takes will have its own peculiar difficulties. I will mention three of the special dangers involved in a restitution emphasis. In each instance the danger can be avoided.

One danger is *emphasizing minor or peripheral points*. We can all supply horrible examples from our experience. The answer to this problem is to keep things in perspective by emphasizing the central matters (which the great commission gives us): the gospel and the nature of man's response to it. Where it is found necessary to affirm other items, their secondary nature will be clearly seen. A true restitution carries its own corrective here.

Another danger is *schism*. Loyalty to restitution has been the occasion for much of the dissent studied in this conference. Nevertheless, I see no reason why the concerns of restitution may not be presented in such a way as to be uniting concepts. In these days of ecumenical scholarship restitution has a contribution to make to the "unity of the Spirit." The Bible, the gospel, Christian living are things all Christians share. The trumpet call to go back to the New Testament church can be sounded not as a retreat into schism, but as a signal for regrouping around the standard, which for the Christian is the cross.

The concern with restitution carries *the risk of substituting orthodoxy or orthopraxy for trust in the Lord*. Restoration implies that we should seek to be right in doctrine and practice. That is important. But its very importance within the restoration perspective may lead one to trust in his being right for his salvation rather than to trust in the One who saves. My salvation does not depend on my being right, but it depends on Christ. As Ron Durham has said, "I believe *that* I should be right; but I believe *in* the rightness [or righteousness] of Christ."

On the other side, there are *advantages to the restoration approach*.

Restoration *emphasizes the embodiment of salvation*. The emphasis on life as well as doctrine means the doctrine must be lived. Eric Fromm in *The Revolution of Hope* says: "Ideas become powerful only if they appear in the flesh; an idea which does not lead to action by the individual and by groups remains at best a paragraph or a footnote in a book." To *have* the truth is important; more important is to *be* the truth. As the word of God became incarnate in Jesus, so salvation or the new creation must become incarnate in the church. Restitution, better than other theological models, so it seems to me, witnesses to this truth.

Restitution *gives dynamic for continual renewal* among God's people. It is when the concepts of restoration are lost, codified in slogans, or not applied that the church becomes narrow, cold, and rigid. The theme of this conference has rightly united "Restitution, Dissent, and Renewal." Restoration has not only caused division; it has also produced renewal. And the papers have demonstrated the power of the New Testament teaching and example to spark revival in the religious life. A church committed to its own tradition and teaching office as authority or to human creeds is hard to reform. A church *under* the Bible has the basis for continual renewal.

Restitution *provides a point of reference* and a pattern *within which meaningful change can occur*. It is the patterns in life that give identity. This is clearly seen in the human body. It is constantly in a state of flux and change. In the midst of the flux patterns are discernible which are the touchstone of personality identity. In medicine this is called homeostasis. Perhaps the identity crisis in individuals and churches of our time is due to a loss of the idea of a divine pattern. However much the pattern idea has been abused, it is still important, and the restitution motif is a reminder that there are patterns which establish who and what we are. A pattern concept is not antithetical to all change. The blueprint or architectural understanding of pattern may be, but the biological, psychological, and sociological understandings of patterns are not. Indeed, when we think of human life, living, it is change that makes the pattern essential. Without a pattern as a point of reference, change is destructive, not creative.

Let us revert to our biblical text for our conclusion. The abiding word is the *gospel* preached to you. Man needs the same gospel today. Sin is still the human problem: "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Christ is still the Lord: "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Christ is God's answer to the human problem. He is the final, definitive revelation of God: God speaks now through his Son (Heb. 1:2). He is the way of salvation: "in none other is there salvation" (Acts 4:12). He is with us "always" (Matt. 28:20) as long as we are carrying out his work—making disciples, baptizing, and teaching.

The word of the Lord abides forever. That, I submit, is the meaning and significance of the restitution motif: preaching the same gospel of Christ, and calling for the same response of faith and obedience—as we do now for a faith-commitment by you, for baptism into Christ if you have not received it, and for a life of Christian growth, which is the need of us all.

□

'Let us hold our view of Scripture as we hold our view of Christ—truly divine and truly human.'

The Infallibility of the Bible and Higher Criticism

by Harry R. Boer

EVANGELICAL scholarship finds itself in a dilemma. The churches it serves have traditionally adhered to the view that the Bible as God's word cannot contain inconsistencies or disparities of any kind. When disparities appear they must in some way be harmonized out of existence. It is in this sense that the words infallibility and inerrancy are frequently applied to Scripture, not only popularly but also theologically. To suggest that there are discrepancies or inconsistencies in the Bible would offend the religious mind of many theologically unschooled believers and some (a dwindling number) of those who have been theologically trained.

The evangelical scholar cannot ignore this. But he also has his academic conscience and the general academic theological community to live with. He resolves the conflict by bowing verbally in both directions. This he does by using the words infallibility, reliability, and trustworthiness interchangeably. The lay mind in the denomination to which the evangelical scholar belongs will probably assume that reliability and trustworthiness mean the same thing as infallibility, and the scholarly sector within and outside his church are silently invited to suppose that infallibility really means reliability and trustworthiness.

Such ambiguity in the use of words has two very serious disadvantages. In the first place, in so high a matter as the proper understanding of the nature of Scripture, usage like this is conducive neither to theological clarity nor to theological integrity. We should therefore seek to avoid it. The second disadvantage is the considerable danger that using "infallibility" in the sense of reliability or trustworthiness will result in losing the quality of absoluteness that attaches to the concept of infallibility. Since absoluteness is obviously not an aspect of reliability and trustworthiness as such, the relative concept will tend in course of time to absorb, neutralize, and eventually eliminate altogether the absoluteness that is implicit in infallibility. The democratizing of royalty will not make kings of commoners but it will very likely pull down royalty to the level of the commoners.

The word "inerrant" is also a misleading adjective. It connotes the unqualified absence of inconsistency or disparity of any kind whatever with respect to any data found in the Bible. Unlike reliability or trustworthiness it is an absolute word. But its absoluteness is applied to an aspect of Scripture that is not in fact inerrant. The Bible is infallible; it is not inerrant in the accepted sense of the word.

With these distinctions before us, what must we understand by the infallibility of the Bible? Here it is important to note that the traditional understanding of infallibility is by no means confined to the harmony or harmonizability of data in the several books of Scripture. It far transcends this popular understanding. Deeply imbedded in the historic view of the infallibility of the Bible is the idea, the massive idea, of the unbreakable, ever valid revelation of the creation, redemption, and consummation of all things in Christ

Reprinted by permission from the Reformed Journal, *March 1976.* *Boer is a Christian Reformed missionary in Nigeria, and a founding editor of the* Reformed Journal.

who is himself the Creator, the Redeemer, the Consummator. We must distinguish between these two kinds of infallibility. The untenability of the popular conception threatens the integrity of the scriptural conception. We wish therefore once more to call attention to data supporting this conclusion.

1. That Jesus *left* Jericho and was appealed to by *two* blind men (Matt. 20:29, 30) is not the same as his leaving Jericho and being appealed to by *one* blind man (Mark 10:46-49) or as his *entering* Jericho and being appealed to by one blind man (Luke 18:35-59). That Jesus is the compassionate Savior who responds to all who call on him is the common and abiding teaching.

2. That the mother of James and John asked for a place of privilege for her sons (Matt. 20:20-28) is not the same as the direct appeal for privilege by James and John themselves (Mark 10:35-45). And the way in which Luke used Jesus' answer to them (22:24-27) relates to a context quite different from that in which Matthew and Mark place it. That Jesus calls for a greatness whereby the kingdom of God inverts the values of the kingdom of man is the common and abiding teaching.

3. That there should be no divorce at all (Mark 10:10-12; Luke 16:18) is not the same as the teaching that there is the one ground of adultery for divorce (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). That marriage is of God's own making and that he enjoins its sanctity on all is the common and abiding teaching.

Are we going to make the effectiveness of our witness to the truly scriptural infallibility of the Bible depend on our ability to harmonize data?

4. The words spoken by the angel to the women at the tomb of the risen Christ (Matt. 28:6-8; Mark 16:6b) are in an important respect not reconcilable with the words spoken to the women by two angels in Luke 24:6-9. That Jesus truly rose from the dead is the common and abiding teaching.

5. The place given to Judea in the ministry of Jesus according to the gospel of John can hardly be squared with the exclusiveness with which Galilee is made the focal center of Jesus' ministry before the Passion in the Synoptics. That Jesus taught the kingdom of God as he walked among men in Galilee and in Judea is the common and abiding teaching.

6. The question of "the rich young ruler" and Jesus' first response to it in Matthew 19:16, 17 is substantively different from the question and answer reported by Mark (10:17, 18) and Luke (18:18, 19). That Jesus taught people to love God above all and their neighbors as themselves is the common and abiding teaching.

The question arises: are we going to make the effectiveness of our witness to the truly scriptural infallibility of the Bible depend on our ability to harmonize such data? When the data cannot reasonably be brought together, must we then appeal to the no longer existing original documents with their assumed correspondence in all respects? Or must we, as in the case of Jesus' cleansing of the temple, which John places at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the Synoptics place at its very end, say that there were *two* temple cleansings? The very most that can be said here is that there *may have been* two temple cleansings. But that helps us not at all. Infallibility declares "thus says the Lord." When we must reconcile disparities by constant and often artificial harmonizations, and by sundry assumptions, our witness to the infallibility of Scripture is bound to create a credibility gap.

Should we not rather understand the infallibility of Scripture in such a way that it does *not* include the assumption that all data in Scripture are necessarily harmonizable? In looking for such a conception of infallibility we are not concerned simply to obviate a difficulty. The problem is basically that of relating, as essential qualities of the word of God inscripturate, the divine—which is always absolute—and the human—which is always relative.

Any attempt to articulate the concept of scriptural infallibility will do well to take full note of the relevance of the incarnation of our Lord. In him, in that human being known to history as Jesus of Nazareth, the second person of the eternal trinity was always present, objectively, really, totally present. More than that, the divine presence was constitutive of his human existence. Without the presence of that divine person in the human being, Jesus would not be Jesus. Yet this deity of our Lord was not *obviously* present, it was not *demonstrably* there. Had the rulers of this world understood the secret and hidden wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It must be revealed through the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-10). Jesus came to his own home and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13). It required and requires faith to discern and adore the deity in the humanity.

It is no different with respect to the objectively existing infallibility of the word of God. When belief in the gospel opens one's eyes to the eternal God speaking through the Scriptures, those very words which to the unbelieving are simply religious literature (even sublime religious literature) are seen to be the infallible word of the ever-living God. Such faith overleaps all inadequacies of human expression, all literary, cultural, numerical, geographical disparities, gaps, inconsistencies. Faith embraces the word that speaks with the certainty, the assurance, the infallibility of God's covenant address to humankind.

This conception, it must be emphasized again, is not a new understanding of the doctrine of the infallibility of

Scripture. For the believing community this view of infallibility has *always* existed. It is not a latter-day definition of the integrity of Scripture. It is simply the application to the Bible of Jesus' age-old saying, "Thy Word is truth."

Even so, there *is* a new element in this view of infallibility and it is of great importance. The new element consists in an absence, an excision. *It excludes from the understanding of infallibility the conception that the Bible as a human literary product is a book in which literary, historical, geographical, numerical or other disparities do not and cannot exist.* In that sense the Bible *cannot* be said to be infallible or inerrant. The true infallibility of Scripture is an article of faith. "He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:47). Like the existence of God, the fact of creation, the nature of man as image-bearer of God, the reality of God's covenant, the deity of Christ, the atoning power of his death, the fact of his resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the nature of the church as Body of Christ, the present reality and future revelation of the new age, the infallibility of the Bible cannot be demonstrated, cannot be proved. It can only be believed, experienced, known through one's acceptance of the gospel of Christ.

This view excludes from the understanding of infallibility the conception that the Bible is a book in which literary, historical, geographical, numerical or other disparities do not and cannot exist.

The adoption of such a view of infallibility as its exclusive meaning will put many things into proper focus and perspective.

It will relieve the Christian mind of a great deal of tension that is not only painful and unnecessary but also without merit or inherent justification.

1. When discoveries in the area of general revelation as disclosed by science, history, or other disciplines call into question certain data of Scripture or certain views we have held about them, the Christian with a true view of the infallibility of Scripture will not be disturbed. Nor will he be unduly elated when such research vindicates the truth of some disputed statement in the Bible. General revelation and special revelation both have one and the same Author. The Creator God *is* the Redeemer God and the Redeemer God *is* the Creator God. The two are not competitors for our loyalty, love, and devotion. The Christian who understands that will patiently await the results of sifting and verification, and when this process has resolved itself his esteem for the Creator who redeems and for the Redeemer who created and re-creates can only be enhanced.

2. The adoption of the scriptural view of infallibility will from a comparative religion point of view set the Bible free from an unwholesome, fruitless, and hopeless competition with the Qu'ran, the holy book of Islam. There indeed is a writing which according to the received Muslim teaching is literally infallible, verbally and factually inerrant. From a higher critical point of view nothing is more farfetched than this claim. Some day Islamic scholarship will have to go through the agony of coming to terms with this incontestable reality. Until that (possibly far-off) day dawns, let us hold our view of Scripture as we hold our view of Christ —truly divine and truly human. In our defense of Christianity to the Muslim community let us make plain our view of infallibility and not fear to speak the offense of the literal fallibility of the Bible to Muslims as the church has not feared to preach the scandal of the cross to the Jews.

3. To hold this view of infallibility does not mean that the Christian now surrenders the Bible to the unbelieving higher critic who may without let or hindrance play fast and loose with it. He who has found and continues to find the Bible to be the living word of the living God can only hold the Bible in the highest honor as the Book among the books. He will always see the whole of Scripture in terms of the reverent, praising, and adoring esteem of Psalm 119. Standing on this rock that cannot be moved, he can afford fearless honesty in handling the human literary garment that both hides and reveals the infallibility with which the divine Author has spoken to us. In yielding up datings that cannot be defended, in reclaiming dates that had been wrongly surrendered, in acknowledging disparities where they are evident, in seeing a time-conditioned context as the bearer of a verity that cannot change, in seeing redemptive content poured into secular frameworks, in recognizing Babylon and Egypt, Greece and Rome, mountains, seas and rivers, art and literature, science, religion and history as earthly instruments of heaven's designs, the believing student of Scripture senses ever more profoundly the mystery and the ecstasy of Paul's "O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" as these find specific expression and embodiment in the salvation disclosed to us by the infallible word.

As it is not possible logically to demonstrate the existence of the Father or of the Son or of the Holy Spirit, so it is not possible to demonstrate logically the infallibility of the Bible.

The infallibility of Scripture which is here proposed is therefore a conception neither broader nor narrower nor in any way different in character from any other doctrine taught in Scripture. It is of one piece with the truths taught in the Apostles' Creed. As it is not possible logically to demonstrate the existence of the Father

or of the Son or of the Holy Spirit, or to demonstrate logically the works peculiar to each, so it is not possible to demonstrate logically by proof, either internal or external to Scripture, the infallibility of the Bible. The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but for believers in that word it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:28). That Psalm 119 is sublime religious poetry is evident to anyone with literary appreciation; what it is really saying can be understood only by one who prays, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (vs. 18). No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matt. 11:27). If men do not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rises from the dead (Luke 16:29-31). If we had a demonstrably infallible Bible, would it be more effective in our conflict with the world than the ark was that Israel took from the Holy of Holies to do battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11)? Not by might nor by power shall God's house be built, but by God's Spirit, says the Lord (Zech. 4:1-10). If the gospel is veiled to those who are perishing, but those for whom God has said, "Let light shine out of darkness," receive in their hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-6). The Pharisees believed in the literal infallibility of the Old Testament, but they did not see the Fulfillment of its promises when he stood before their eyes.

The infallibility of the Bible must be seen as an integral and characteristic part of the majestic movement of God's redemptive enterprise among men concentrating itself in a baby born in a stable. There he put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; there he filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he sent empty away (Luke 1:52, 53). With his priests and scribes, inerrant book in hand, Herod did not understand this (Matt. 2:1-8). The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant (Ps. 25:14).

Do those who understand these things have to know whether there were one or two temple cleansings? And as for those who do not comprehend them—would they be brought to believe if they were infallibly shown that there were two?

□

GOD, I ACHE

A Prayer by Allen Holden, Jr.

I sit in the crowded Sunday morning assembly
Listening to the preacher proclaim our oneness
And urging us to celebrate our unity
But I ache, Lord.

I see the people here (at least the back of their heads)
We eat the bread that says we are one body
But we eat alone, in silence
And I ache for a touch from a brother or sister.

It's not that I don't believe in you, Lord
But I need to see you embodied, here with me
Send me a brother or sister, God
For I ache.

Former atheist John N. Clayton teaches science in the public schools in South Bend Indiana. Having come to faith through his scientific studies, he now produces tapes, tracts, and films on Christian evidences.

'So You Believe

THE QUESTIONER'S askew glance radiated his vision of inconsistency in the statement he had just heard. "But I thought you said you were a Christian!" The accusing finger was now brought into play.

"I am," I replied, "and further, I believe that the Bible is the 'literal word of God.'"

The questioner's hands reached for the sky in a gesture of hopelessness. "You can't believe in God and in evolution at the same time. All you're trying to do is go liberal like all of the rest." And with that he strode briskly away, vigorously writing notes in a black book reserved for future castigations of those not conforming to his education and understanding.

It is tragically true that many Christians honestly believe that evolution is a nasty plot, originated by Satan through communists and atheists, to mislead innocent people into believing a lie. It is true that evolution in the sense of man having come from an amoeba violates Genesis and the very nature of man as a being created in the image of God. But the actual *processes* of evolution are excellent demonstrations of God's thoughtful design, and are factually and biblically sound.

Let us begin our study by looking at some definitions. The Bible word "kind" comes from the Hebrew word *min* which is a broad term covering wide groups of animals. One example of "kind" is the word "fowl" in Genesis 1. What is being said is that God created two birds. What is *not* being said, is that God created two crows, two robins, two bluebirds, etc. Similar statements could be made about other forms of living things, and 1 Corinthians 15:39 classifies all flesh into only four basic "kinds." Obviously, the biblical concept of "kind" is a broad and general term.

In contrast, the taxonomist of science is constantly classifying animals in narrower and narrower groupings. We break animals down, not into broad categories, but into phyla, subphyla, order, class, species, family, race, etc. Many people attempt to equate the word "kind" in Genesis to the scientific word "species." This is most unfortunate, for man has created new species.

A species is defined as "a group of living things that can interbreed and produce fertile offspring." Some forms of frogs, radishes, and birds developed in Japan in recent years cannot interbreed with the original stock. They are indeed "new species."

The word "evolution" is stereotyped by many as meaning only that "man came from monkey." Literally the word means "an unfolding type of change." Certainly evolution does occur. Man has become progressively taller over the past 100 years, as diet and medicine have progressed. New strains of cattle like the Charolais; dogs like the cockapoo; roses, corn, etc., have been developed by man's control of genetic material in living things. So too, God has used similar tools in his creation of living things.

A simple look at the fossil record of the fish can show God's wisdom in building into living things the capacity to change (evolve). The fossils show clearly that the first fish were relatively uncomplicated organisms. They essentially breathed by moving with their mouths open, forcing water through their gills. Gradually, many varieties of fish came into being, culminating in the

by
John N. Clayton

in Evolution!'

many different species we see today. Some new kinds like the Coho have been influenced by man and have been found to be very useful. This kind of change is called by some "phylogenetic evolution," and it conforms to the Genesis account in every detail.

Another example of this kind of change is man himself. Acts 17 tells us we are all made of one blood, and Eve's name means "the mother of all living." In spite of this, we have numerous races. The black man is ideally suited to living in tropical areas because his dark skin protects him from vitamin D poisoning and ultraviolet light exposure. The Eskimo, on the other hand, possesses a layer of fat cells under the epidermis which protects him from the extreme cold of his environment.

God did not equip man to live only in Texas (contrary to the opinion of some). God has equipped man to live anywhere on the earth, and this is only possible if man can change as his environment changes.

How big a change can this produce? There are two ways to answer this question. One of these is to read God's account. Genesis groups the forms of life into very broad areas, similar to 1 Corinthians 15:39. Genesis 1:20 tells us that one group was "moving creatures in the sea," coming from the Hebrew *tannim*. We are also told that fowl (vs. 26), mammals (*"remes"* in Hebrew, vs. 24) and man were formed.

Obviously this description is not complete, however, for many forms are omitted, such as bacteria, protozoans, worms, mollusca, insects, etc. We are told that the serpent was changed, but otherwise the subject is left open by the Genesis writer since it is not the purpose of the book to give a detailed explanation of the creation of each of the 110 million species of living things on this planet.

The second source we can use in answering this question is the fossil record. It is a fact of paleontology that major gaps occur between certain groups of living things in the fossil record. There are no fossil links between the reptiles and the mammals. No intermediates exist between any of the phyla. Add to these facts the fact that all phyla of life have representatives in the earliest rocks of our planet (Cambrian rocks), including chordates (backboned animals i.e. the graptolite), and the answer to our question becomes plain.

God created basic forms of each of various kinds of life roughly conforming to our phyla. Within each of these groupings, change has taken place producing many variations in the original forms. This process not only produced the variations we see today, but allowed life to survive on a changing earth.

The problem of this situation is that many people try to extrapolate from this obvious change to explain the creation of every living thing on earth. Not only is this in contradiction to the fossil record, genetics, and common sense, but it also conflicts with the biblical account and the biblical definition of man as a being created in the image of God.

Like many other issues, extremism has hidden the truth from many, causing conflicts which are entirely man-caused. Students can understand and see phylogenetic evolution as a demonstration of God's wisdom and design. Let us not, in our defending of God's word, take a position which identifies us with the Pharisees of Jesus' day. □

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CROSS CURRENTS

THE BICENTENNIAL AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DENOMINATION

Are we or aren't we? A *denomination*, I mean. Amid dogmatic assertions that we are, from the left, and that we aren't, from the right, I want to make one thing perfectly clear, from the unobscured viewpoint of the middle: We are and we aren't.

What difference does it make, anyway? Historians can quote us on both sides. Yet, when they write their history books few outsiders really care. So why the fuss among insiders?

Obviously, a part of the concern arises because we have claimed *not* to be a denomination; and we feel either honor-bound to make good the claim, or embarrassed by our history of doing pretty much as denominations do. Also, several among us keep insisting that biblical Christianity was not denominational, and that this is not an unworthy goal.

One difficulty is that those who object most to the term "denomination" seem to be the most denominational. Their memory of the biblical picture is accurate enough. But they have interpreted that ideal to require withdrawal from other Christians. This has resulted in the odd situation of their frequently being unaware of it when their religious neighbors also support the non-denominational, "Christians only" plea. When this audacity is discovered, the response is often, "Hey, that's *my* line. *We're* the non-denominational church and we can't both be." And the joy that should accompany the discovery that someone else shares a vision of the One Body is dampened in a quarrel over which group is more undenominational.

On the other hand it seems equally odd that those on the left, who have a more biblical spirit of acceptance of other Christians, are often so quick to confess that everyone is denominational that they lose sight of the ideal of the unity of all believers. When *they* hear someone enthusiastically "discover" the undenominational plea, their reaction is likely to be "Ho-ho-*ho*! That's where I came in, and it's the worst part of the whole movie."

As I ponder all this from my wonderfully centrist position, I wonder if our nation's bicentennial fervor might help explain it, at least by analogy. Here we are, citizens of a world much larger than any one nation. We share rights and duties with humanity because we are all humans. Only a vicious nationalism requires citizens to withdraw from the human race under one of its manifold flags and declare that they alone have the God-ordained right to exist.

And yet, we are not merely world citizens. The one-world ideal, like the One Body ideal of the New Testament, is always present—that is the way of ideals. If we arrive there, however, it will be from the particular background we call American. Hopefully we do not, by our allegiance to that part of humanity, exclude an allegiance to humanity as a whole. But if we are not loyal at many points to *this* people, to *this* land, to *this* flag, we are not loyal to the humanity that is closest to us.

As we celebrate our national past this year, we have an unequalled responsibility to say to the sort of nationalism that requires war, "You can be world citizens, but not the only citizens." Should we fail to loyally support such a message, merely because we are not the only citizens?

A similar line of thought reminds us that there are some who feel compelled to "leave the Church of Christ because it's no better than any other denomination." Surely our plea does not require this. Should we cease to exist simply because we are not the only citizens of the heavenly realm? On the contrary, as in the case of the national responsibility, we have a unique task, a clear word, a distinct light that must not be hid under the bushel either of despair or of isolation.

It is also cause for celebration that as citizens of Christ's kingdom we are dedicated both to the whole and its parts. As long as we admit that not every saved person is locatable in the ranks of the anti-instrumental, pro-cooperation, pro-Sunday School Church of Christ, we must also admit that in some sense we are only a part (denomination) of the whole. But our love for the whole, our refusal to condone exclusive parties, our commitment to non-denominationalism, are also present if we are faithful to God and our own heritage.

Of course, this stance does not fit into the "sect, church, denomination" scheme so helpful to church historians and sociologists. The both-andness bothers those whose loyalty depends on neatness. But neatness rarely sparks movements and causes. And there is still some healthy fireworks left in the notion that when some Christians are separated from other Christians, some*one* (part, denomination) should say to them all: "You can be Christians only, though not the only Christians."

—RD

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Coming Next Month:

Missionary Chester Woodhall reports on the tense racial situation in Rhodesia, with special reference to its effect on Church of Christ missions.

In an article marking the nation's 200th birthday, Gerald C. Tiffin asks whether it is possible or desirable to separate Christianity and politics.

Steven Spidell searches for a means of taking advantage of the best of 'tradition' without being paralyzed by it.